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AN ESSAY FOR PROFESSOR RUTH-ARLENE W. HOWE OF BOSTON COLLEGE LAW SCHOOL

MARIA GRAHN-FARLEY*

When Professor Ruth-Arlene W. Howe tells you to do something, you just do it, which is a good description of my relationship with Professor Howe of Boston College Law School. It is *not* a good description of my personality in general and it is *not* a good description of Ruth-Arlene's personality. I do not just follow what people tell me to do, and Ruth-Arlene does not rule from above.

The reason why I and so many others happily follow Ruth-Arlene's requests is the same reason why I wanted to create this symposium. The symposium was not a request; rather, it began as my way of recognizing her contributions. The symposium is a way of saying thank you and showing gratitude for all that she has given, and keeps giving, to each and every one of us. We are happy to know her. Ruth-Arlene is the one we imagine but so seldom find when we go to law school as students or professors; a wise, giving, caring person. Ruth-Arlene is the law professor we want to be. She is a professor who teaches the law of her field and does so in a manner that shows us the way we want to pursue our careers and live our lives.

This symposium in the form of a *Festschrift* celebrating the scholastic work of Ruth-Arlene would not have happened without the support and encouragement of Dr. Barbara Marshall. When I, as a Visiting Scholar at the Sociology Department of Boston College, came up with the idea of a *Festschrift*, Professor Anthony Farley and I jointly asked Dr. Marshall for the support of the University's main campus. She was immediately both encouraging and helpful in obtaining funding from the Office of the Academic Vice President.

Ruth-Arlene has chosen to live as she preaches. She is a professor of family law with a focus on the most vulnerable in our society, the children who are made vulnerable by the operation of social structures and individual family tragedies. Children of color are made vul-

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nerable by racism. In addition, children of color are often without the full protection of their original families, existing as adopted children, children in foster care or at risk thereof.

Ruth-Arlene approaches the everyday politics of law school with a firm commitment against discrimination. Her commitment shows in her always-open door to all students, regardless of color, creed, gender or sexual orientation. Her advice is always influenced by her anti-racist and anti-discriminatory commitment and her constant belief in the possibility of human improvement. At numerous times have I heard her say with a tender glimmer in her eyes, "she or he was a little slow at the beginning but is now climbing a steep learning curve." Her insistence on never giving up on a student or a person is why a celebration of Professor Howe and her work is such a multifaceted event, with people from every walk of life. People who, without the lessons taught by Professor Howe, would not have much in common but who, thanks to her, are part of a large network of people committed not only to Ruth-Arlene as a person but first and foremost to an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory agenda that goes beyond self interest and that reaches out to people who have yet to meet Professor Howe.

Thank you Professor Howe.